

World Sailing Racing Rules Question and Answer Service

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Situation

In light winds, two boats (A and B) were the only participants in a race around some islands and marks. The two boats had similar ratings. B, lying second, ran aground on a falling tide. She asked for assistance from A, and A turned back and spent an hour and a half assisting, pulling B free. B had a damaged rudder, but was able to slowly motor home. A decided that as there was only 20 minutes until the expiring of the time limit and it would take her about 40 minutes to reach the finishing line, she would sail home and request redress.

The protest committee determined that:

- (a) Had A not gone to the rescue of B, A would have finished within the time limit, and
- (b) Had A continued racing after completing the rescue, it would have been impossible for her to finish within the time limit.

Question 1

Does the last sentence of rule 35 ('If no boat finishes within the time limit, the race committee shall abandon the race') prevent the protest committee from giving redress in form of 'points for first place'?

Answer 1

No. Rules 35 and 90.3 require the race committee to abandon a race when no boat sails the course and finish within the time limit, but this obligation applies only to the race committee. When the protest committee decides that a boat is entitled to redress, as in this case, rule 64.2 requires the protest committee to make as fair an arrangement as possible for all the boats affected.

In this case, no boat sailed the course and finished within the time limit, and therefore, the race committee had no option but to abandon the race. At the same time, A was required by fundamental rule 1.1 to give help to B, even if it meant that A would not finish the race within the time limit.

The protest committee found as a fact that A would have finished within the time limit had she not stopped racing to help B, and that by giving help to B, A's score had been made significantly worse through no fault of her own. Based on these facts A is entitled to redress. In a case like this, with only two competitors and one of them damaged and retired, the fairest decision is to reinstate the race and give A points for the first place.

Question 2

Would it make any difference, if there was a mark between the rescue area and the finishing line, at which the race committee could have shortened the course, which the protest committee determined A could have reached in the 20 minutes available to her before the expiration of the time limit?

Answer 2

The fact that there is a mark is not sufficient in itself. If the race committee actually shortens the course and A decides not to finish although she could have done it within the time limit, the protest committee may find that A's score in the race was made significantly worse but not 'through no fault of her own' and that A therefore would not be entitled to redress.